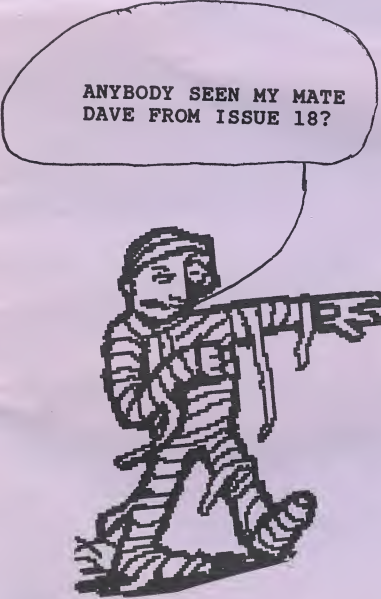# THE ATARI 8-BIT NEWS-PAPER

Previously published on disk as the Atari 8-bit News-Disk

£1.50

Issue 19 - July/Aug 1994

ANYBODY SEEN MY MATE DAVE FROM ISSUE 18?

* WORLD'S WORST ATARI SOFTWARE

* SMON IN QUICK

* GAMING COLUMN

* PRINTER REVIEW

* HOW TO ANNOY OTHER COMPUTER USERS

* AND MORE!

PUBLISHED IN THE U.K. BY:
DEAN GARRAGHTY SOFTWARE

CONTENTS

Issue 19 - July/August 1994

* * * * * *

SUBMISSIONS

We welcome submissions from readers. They can be on any Atari-related subject. Please submit your articles on disk in ASCII format (i.e. no special word processor commands should be in). We "pay" for articles in free PD disks from our library. We usually pay around 3 disks per article.

EDITORIAL

By Dean Garraghty

Welcome to issue 19 of the News-Paper. Let me start by saying that the future of this magazine is now in some doubt. Nearly everyone who needed to re-subscribe after issue 18 didn't. This means we have dropped WAY below our target readership number. This basically means that the magazine costs more to produce than it actually brings in. At the moment the magazine is being part-funded by other parts of the business, but I cannot allow this to carry on forever. A solution must be found, and quickly. The only obvious solution is to get more subscribers. This is far from easy. Even at £6 a year, people just don't want to know. I think £1.50 an issue is a good price, and I honestly believe that the magazine is good value for money. Unfortunately, not everyone agrees. I have taken a lot of hassle from people since the magazine went on to paper last year. This I could well do without. I am currently examining other methods of publication, which would hopefully allow the News-Paper to continue. If you are due to re-subscribe now then please do so. You will not lose your money. Publication will hopefully continue somehow. Also, please try and get other people to subscribe. Go twist some arms! Here's an incentive. Two free PD disks of your choice for every new subscriber you bring in. Just get the person to mention your name when they subscribe!

It seems I annoyed Ben Poehland in last issue's editorial. I have had a three page letter from him moaning at me about my comments last issue. The whole problem seems to be over the word "offered". It appears that he objects to me using this word because AC was not "offered" to anyone. However, it appears the new staff were "approached". What difference one word makes is beyond me! Even poor-old Alan Hitchen got moaned at for simply saying "the sad news about the demise of Atari Classics" in his opening comments in one of his articles in issue 18. Anyway, a one year subscription for the UK is $38. The new "owners" can be contacted at: Atari Classics, 5507 Langford Court, Concord, CA 94521-1614, U.S.A.

Some more news from the US now. Fine Tooned Engineering is a new company just set up. Their product range is already impressive. They have all the old ICD/OSS products, and those from Newell Industries. In addition to these, they also have some extremely powerful hardware upgrades available, including the MARS 8 project. Full details of this are not yet available. We have been in contact with FTE about their products, and we hope to be able to sell their stuff in the UK. More details when we have them.

The News-Paper yearly disk is now on sale. It costs £2.50 (UK price) and comes on a double sided, 1050 density disk (so needs a 1050/XF551 and so on). See the advert in this issue for full details.

A bit of sad news here. Jay Miner, the designer of the Atari, died recently of heart failure. This issue of the News-Paper is dedicated to him. Without him, the Atari probably wouldn't be the unique machine it is, and we may not all be sitting here now using one.

Don't forget to re-subscribe if you need to, and don't forget to try and get as many people as you can to subscribe. We need your help!

The World's Worst Atari Software

by Richard Gore

I must start this article with a big "thank you" to all those of you who took the time to send in your votes; I must say some of the votes were quite surprising to me while others were pretty much what I had expected. I would also like to make it clear that this is very much a subjective matter and opinions vary on how good (or bad) a particular game is. I will present the results and then go on to discuss some of the software mentioned. Should my opinions vary from yours, please do not be offended or discouraged from replying to further requests of this kind. My statements are not personal insults just my opinions on the software in question! Right, let's get underway, with the games vote first.........

Only four games got more than one vote and out of these there was a clear winner for the worst Atari game of all time. However, all of the following games got one vote (out of the three choices you were asked to list) or were mentioned as being particularly bad: New York City, Bruce Lee, Cops 'n Robbers, Kaboom, Tail of Beta Lyrae, Molecule Man, Despatch Rider, Monkey Magic, Panic Express, Winter Wally, Spiky Harold, Caverns, Cyclod, Caverns of Khafka, Firefleet, Blue Max 2001, Space Eggs, Stratosphere, Space Shuttle, Jumbo Jet Pilot, Moon Shuttle, Collapse, Up 'n Down, Alien Ambush, Sneakers and Death Race. Those that got two votes were The Last V8, California Run and Castle Top (two first places), but the out and out winner with four votes (one first place and three second places) is FRENESIS. So there you have it, you the games players have voted Frenesis (by Mastertronic) as the all time worst Atari game and I have to say I agree. Frenesis really is dire, basically you get a black screen with geometrically shaped 'aliens' moving around; you control horizontal and vertical bars and you must move these bars over the aliens to destroy them. At least that's what I think you have to do but it doesn't seem to be that easy. Put it this way, after about 30 seconds you become very bored and your thoughts rapidly turn to more interesting things like watching paint dry. It says on the inlay 'Guaranteed to bring you near to total nervous collapse! ......', well I wonder did anybody try to take Mastertronic up on this guarantee?

The runner-up definitely has to be Castle Top with its two first place votes. Castle Top was released by Alternative Software and written by Steven Macilwee (who later went on to write Speed Run for Red Rat Software) and I can safely say it is not his best effort. It is set in more gothic times and you play the part of a (noble) knight who must jump across the castle battlements and rescue a princess. The graphics are crude and blocky and are certainly the wrong colour. Have you ever seen a pink castle? or a knight wearing green and purple? Okay, say Mr Macilwee used his artistic license and why shouldn't he? Well because the game is absolute ****. The jumps you have to make have to be pixel perfect which is not easy given the incredibly slow controls. It is very difficult to progress into the game and it does deserve its runner up spot.

California Run, another title from Alternative Software is a racing car game from the Pole Position mould. Actually I don't think it deserves its bad reputation. For a budget game (£1.99 on tape) I think it is quite good, you get a choice of cars to race in, okay so they all look similar when on the track but at least it tried to introduce a feature all too often left out of Atari car racing games. The graphics are nothing stunning but quite innovative, they are a bit blocky but they do work quite well. Game play is like other car racing games, you have to finish a stage within a certain time limit and you know the rest. Anyway I wouldn't have voted for it in my three but two people did so obviously there are people out there who don't like it.

The Last V8 was Mastertronic's third attempt at a budget game and its first one in its MAD (Mastertronics Added Dimensions) range. It was only available on tape and took a huge amount of time to load, in excess of 20 minutes! The screen is split into thirds, the bottom third displaying the title and a depiction of a car, the middle third contains the necessary instrument readouts, speed, shields, etc., while the top third contains the actual game playing area and this is where the problem exists. You have to guide your car using a joystick or the keyboard around the roadways, however these roads are very narrow and you have to be very careful, couple this with the very strict time limit and the game's difficulty is its downfall. The graphics and sounds are very good, top class in fact but the game fails because it is too hard to play properly, actually I found it easier to play using the keyboard rather than the joystick! There are worse games around so it is perhaps unjustly included here but once again it's what you the games players think.

There is one game that nobody mentioned that I think can challenge Frenesis for the top spot as the worst game of all time; that game is IQ. IQ is nicely packaged in a large cassette box with fluorescent pink titling, however that is where the plus points end. The package contains minimal instructions, just enough to cover loading and saving the game. The game is set on a grid of dots with four coloured 'sparks'. These sparks move about and leave a coloured trail, what that's for I really don't know. The instructions talk about S.A.I.L.s - Super Artificially Intelligent Life, well you need to be as this game is a load of ****. Game play is non-existent, basically it's not really a game at all because you really don't know what to do and you cannot work out what you are supposed to do. Perhaps there should have been some more instructions in the box, but my copy didn't have any!! One interesting point is that the minimal instructions do say that paddles can be used but since I don't have any I couldn't try it out; I ask myself would I have wanted to anyway?

In my opinion IQ and Frenesis stand out as being the very worst Atari software and share equal first place, Castle Top is a worthy (or should it be unworthy) second place. There are also some other games that I would like to add to the list of bad games; these are Castle Assault, Bug Off!, and Submarine Commander. Universal Hero has also been much maligned for having a nasty bug that refuses to let you finish the game!

I also feel that some of the games that have been voted for are not at all bad, Bruce Lee for example is a fine game, lots of platforms, nice graphics, the green, fat, sumo wrestler (Yomo I think) is particularly good. Winter Wally is a little childish but it does have one or two nice spot effects. Some criticisms were levelled because the games are too hard, for example Spiky Harold - I too have had difficulty getting off the first screen! Blue Max 2001 was quoted as being not a patch on the original; I don't agree. Blue Max and Blue Max 2001 are very similar, okay so they scroll in different diagonal directions and the graphics are different but the basic game play is identical in both cases. There were some very old games mentioned, these include Space Eggs, Jumbo Jet Pilot, Caverns and Cyclod. Unfortunately, the only one

of these that I have is Caverns so I cannot say anything about the other three, but I can say something about Caverns. Caverns was written in 1982 in BASIC for the Atari 400/800 (16K) machines and it shows. The graphics are very simple and the game play isn't much better. You have to guide a dot across the screen avoiding various obstacles. When considering games of this genre it has to be taken into account when they were programmed. Back in 1982 there were basically two types of software: top quality machine code ones written by established programmers/companies, and those struggling to get into the market anyway they could. I think Caverns belongs to the second category. It's quality is less than many type-in listings but I can't bring myself to include it in my list of all time worst games because at least it was an attempt to give support when very little existed unlike most of the later attempts which were obviously an attempt to cash in on the 'boom' in the Atari 8-bit's life cycle. Well that's enough about games, now I'll talk about the serious software.....

Once again there is a clear-cut winner in this section. Four pieces of serious software got more than one vote but those that only got one vote are: Atari BASIC, Atari Writer, Mini Office II (word processor part), Superscript, ACCs Disk Utilities(?), The Slave, Mini Office II (Spreadsheet part), Atari Paint, and Conversational French. Most of these are hard for me to comment on since I don't own most of them. The major difference between games and serious software is people only buy a piece of serious software to do a certain task whereas most people will play games. There has also always been a price difference, generally with serious software being more expensive and as such people wouldn't take the risk of buying it. I will give you my thoughts on some of these first before I go on and tell you the winners!

Atari BASIC has gone through three incarnations, entitled revision A, B and C. Each one has bugs including the latest revision C. The voter for Atari BASIC (a chap who we all know) said he has used many versions of BASIC but Atari has to be the worst since it does nothing. Well that's not entirely true; it does do some things but it is very lacking in features, for example no easy disk access commands. There are alternatives: BASIC XL, BASIC XE (both written by the same people who wrote Atari BASIC), and perhaps the best of the lot Turbo BASIC, a Public Domain disk-based language.

The Slave is an adventure creator program; it was severely slagged off when reviewed in the national Atari magazines and as such I suspect it didn't sell all that many copies. It was written by a small firm (Gregory software if my memory serves me right) whom I never heard of again!

Mini Office II was heralded as the best suite of programs ever written anywhere, well in Atari User at least; it just so happens that Database Publications published Atari User as well as publishing Mini Office II! I must admit the package is quite good, with rare support for the 1029 printer, but it does have a few bugs and it just goes to show what a subjective matter serious software is. Still nevertheless I think Mini Office II which contains six utilities: word processor, spreadsheet, database, label maker, graph maker, and comms package is one of the better value-for-money pieces of serious software.

I've held you in suspense enough; the four that got multiple votes are The Alchemist, Atari Macro Assembler, DOS 3 and System 8. The winner(!) in non-Miss World style, with two firsts and a third is (drum roll..) Atari macro assembler; DOS 3 came second with two firsts and The

Alchemist and System 8 came joint third.

System 8 is a pools predictor program from CDS/Blue Ribbon that won its honourable thrid place because the people who bought the programs are still poor and never won anything!! Also now the Premiere league is set up the league structure system is all wrong. CDS also did a title called Turf Form, a program along similar lines but used for predicting horse racing winners, now this never received any votes so either nobody bought it or those that did buy it won some money on the horses!!!!!

The Alchemist is a tape-to-disk transfer system, and not a very good one at that. It's awkward to use, very time consuming, the trial and error used in trying to get a converted game to run is ridiculous, and you can only get one game per disk. Transdisk IV is a much better (albeit not perfect) option for tape-to-disk transfer. On the back of the instructions for The Alchemist is a little section offering a tape-to-disk transfer service for £4.50 per game for any games that you cannot convert using The Alchemist. Now no tape-to-disk system can cope with all tapes and it does say so in the instructions, but it doesn't show much confidence in their product if they advertise a service like this on a tape-to-disk utility!

DOS 3 was the original DOS supplied with the 1050 disk drives. It enabled access to the enhanced density that the 1050 offered. However, it was incompatible with earlier DOS systems and was very inefficient with disk space and far too simplistic to use as a serious DOS. Atari eventually got around to providing a replacement, actually produced by somebody else for Atari. This replacement was DOS 2.5, a much better DOS which has now become the standard for Atari disk formats. There are, of course, many other DOSs available, these include SpartaDOS 3.2 (which is now shareware), SpartaDOS X (which is still commercial and is about to be re-released in an updated form), Super DOS, MyDOS, and many many more.

So onto the winner of the worst piece of serious Atari software; the Atari Macro Assembler and a worthy winner it is too. You get a disk with two programs on; one is the editor, the other is the compiler. To switch between the two you have to load them from DOS, not very user friendly. The manuals supplied are quite substantial. I don't use it much (at all even), I prefer the also maligned Atari Assembler/Editor cartridge but people tell me it is slow and hard to use.

So there you have it, the all-time worst Atari game (Frenesis) and serious software (Atari Macro Assembler). For those that are interested my choices would have been:

Games	Serious
1. Frenesis	Cut 'n Paste
2. IQ	Atari Macro Assembler
3. Castle Top	DOS 3

Cut 'n Paste is a word processor; it has very nice editing facilities and a unique menu bar, but the printing options were limited and never seemed to work properly - I kept getting half lines being printed and then two or three full sheets of paper being fed through, aaarrrggghhhh! What good is a word processor that can't print out properly? Okay so I could have had things set up wrong, but I tried all the options and everything I could think of but still no joy, so I gave up and bought AtariWriter Plus, one purchase I have never regretted.

Well that's the end of this article. Next time I hope to do a similar article but this time entitled the World's best Atari software and I'd appreciate your help again.

I want to split it up into five categories: 'Best Arcade game', 'Best adventure game', 'Best piece of serious software', 'Best game ever' and 'The game you would most like to see on the Atari 8-bit'. Just like last time send three nominees for each section except for the 'Best game ever' section which should be just one game, the game you think is the best game ever produced on the Atari 8-bit. Please respond to this and send your nominees to DGS at the usual address. Without your input the article will just be my own opinions and that's not a fair coverage of the software scene. Anyway, I look forward to seeing your votes.....

Gaming Column

by Richard Gore

Well, after my brush with exams and the like I'm back to once again cast my eye over the Atari 8-bit gaming scene. I'm pleased to say we have had quite a good response regarding the World's Worst software request, look elsewhere within this Newsletter for the full article.

I would like to start this column by making a complaint, directed at the editor of this mag! Yes, if it weren't for the fact that he has the evidence sat on his Hard Drive I would have my lawyers initiate libel proceedings against Dean! How ungrateful can you get? I sit for hours trying to think of topics and then composing the various articles I write, and then he turns round and complains about my spelling. I'm the first to admit my spelling is not the best in the world and I do have a dictionary and spell checker but why should I bother? It takes time and I have many other things I could be doing instead of sitting there while the proofreader scans through the file! I mean it's not like it's my living, and I certainly don't get paid for writing the articles, and besides it gives Dean something else to do and brings a smile to his face once in a while!

I would also like to bring to your attention that although at AMS Kemal was not exactly enthralled with my new software (see last issue's AMS report) he has been in touch since and said he would like to sell them all. Obviously when he sat down and had a play himself he found them to be of top quality. If they are good enough for KE-Soft why aren't they good enough for you? I have not had one reply from last issue's advert - why not?

Oh well, back to the issue at hand. While at AMS I purchased two titles from the ANG stand; they were Battleships (a computerised version of well, yes, you guessed it - battleships) and Humanoid (a horizontally scrolling shoot-em-up). Both games usually retail at £5 and are available on disk (and Humanoid is also available on tape priced at £4.50) direct from ANG in the Netherlands. Their address is: ANG Software, Ridderkerksestraat 60, 3114 RK Schiedam, Netherlands. Okay, now we've got the blurb out of the way let's see if these games are really worth buying.......

Battleships is a clone of the board game with the same name. For those who have never heard of it(?) you simply place your collection of ships on a grid and then you take it in turns (yourself and then an opponent) to try and guess where the ships are. If you guess the correct grid location of all the parts of a ship you sink that ship. When all of your opponent's ships are sunk you win, always assuming your opponent hasn't sunk all your ships first! This computer version is reasonably faithful to the original board game. Upon booting you are greeted with quite a lengthy load sequence and you have to flip the disk once. There are several different screens but they're really just for cosmetic effect. When loading is complete you are greeted with a picture of two battle ships and a choice of several game options. These include the number of players (one -v- computer or player -v- player) and the number of joysticks to be used. Upon pressing Start you are asked to position your ships. This is a simple procedure carried out using a joystick which controls the on-screen cursor (my advice is to spread your ships out). Once all the ships are set, 'click' on END and the game will begin. You initially have 20 shots at the grid; you simply mark these with the on-screen cursor. The scene then flips to a picture

of your ship's guns blazing away. Should you score a hit a red explosion flashes on the horizon, if not you see the missile splash down into the sea. This scene is very nice for the first few times but it rapidly becomes slow and annoying, fortunately if you hold down the fire button, and/or rapidly press it, the shots are fired much quicker and you return to the grid screen, but this time it's your opponent's turn (whether computer or human controlled) to have a blast at your ships. The whole thing repeats and progresses until all of one person's ships are destroyed. However, the number of shots you get per turn decreases with the increasing number of ships destroyed. Fortunately, the computer plays fair; it appears to randomly select the grid positions until it finds one of your ships, it then homes in on the surrounding positions until it has sunk your ship, just the way it should be played. That's basically it; the graphics are very nice, the sounds are well implemented, and the game gels together quite nicely. There is even a finishing screen that loads in from the disk presenting you with a simulated print-out of the result hanging out of a printer, so be sure to leave your disk in the drive at all times or you might be caught out. The only quibble I have is that the shooting scene does get very boring after a while, and the facility to skip it by pressing the fire button doesn't always work properly - the best way is to hold the fire button down (and keep it down) just before the switch to the gun screen is about to happen and then it usually skips back to the selection screen. This is only a minor point to an otherwise top quality game, especially if you are a fan of the original board game but don't have an opponent to play against. Definitely one to consider.

Humanoid actually dates back to 1992 so it's not all that new, but the quality is certainly there. After loading, it de-crunches itself, so there is in fact more code than there seems to be from the quite short load time. The opening screen is nicely shaded similar to the way Zeppelin used to do their title screens, and there is a scrolling game story line (in English!) at the bottom of the screen. Pressing fire gets you into the action. Humanoid is a one player horizontally scrolling shoot-em-up very similar in style to Zybex but with no variety of weapons. About four-fifths of the screen makes up the scrolling area while the bottom fifth details, from left to right, in large readable numerals the number of lives you have, your score, and the level you are on.

The scrolling is smooth but quite slow, which is a good thing because there are some pretty tight spaces you have to manoeuvre through. The scenery is nicely detailed and shaded, as are the aliens which you must shoot, and so is your ship. Colours are used to good effect and it is obvious the graphics artist spent some time on them. After completing each level you enter a bonus round. Here there is a ship on the right of the screen rapidly firing at you, I haven't quite worked out what you're supposed to do here, probably fire back, but it's hard as those missiles certainly come thick and fast. Anyway, after you die on the bonus (which has no effect on your lives), you are sent back into the next scrolling level for more of the same. When you die, and you will, there is a high score table and also a record of number of shots fired, number of aliens hit, and number of aliens you missed, so you can tell just how bad you really did! Overall this is another good game; the graphics and sounds are well above average but I can't help get that feeling I've seen it all before, many times. However, if you're a shoot-em-up lover this one could be for you.

Well that's about all, I've just got time to say please show your support to the Atari 8-bit supporters like ANG and the many others that try their best to support you (including myself!). Even if you just buy one game for £5 they will appreciate the support and it will help to show them you want them to continue in their efforts. That's definitely all for this time, but you can be certain these games won't be in the World's Worst Atari Software list!

TOP SIX WAYS TO ANNOY OTHER COMPUTER OWNERS

By Kevin Cooke

With the sudden upsurge of computers in the home, you are bound to know someone who has bought a computer or console recently and can't seem to stop talking about it. Boring, aren't they? Well, to prevent you from being put through this grief, I have put together a list of my six favourite ways to shut these people up.

Please note that the following list is in no particuar order:

1. If you know a friend with a console, keep on saying things like "...the games are good value, aren't they!", trying hard to sound as if you mean it. After the ninth or tenth time, they are bound to get the message.

2. String together lots of technical sounding words into a sentence such as "The Display List Interrupt must really speed up the machine code downloading rate". As console owners will have no idea that any of these words exist, let alone what any of them mean, they will soon shut up in the hope of learning some of these words to impress their friends with.

3. Let a friend rave on about their latest game. As soon as you have had one go on it, suggest that you "...watch a video or something!". Annoyance is guaranteed!

4. When you see the graphics of a friend's favourite computer game, ask them something like "...couldn't they fix the computer properly then?". They may well think you're being serious!

5. Ask a Commodore 64 owner why he/she always abbreviates the name to "C64". Don't except "...because it's easier to say!" as an answer, and keep arguing back. The desired effect will soon be achieved.

6. If someone just will not stop raving on about their computer or console, load a game that you can survive at for over half an hour, suggesting you have "first go". They will soon get bored and remember that they are due somewhere else in five minutes time!

So there they are, six great ways to annoy these potential pests. Remember to keep this copy of THE ATARI 8-BIT NEWS-PAPER with you at all times. Not only will it serve as a useful reference for the above six points, but if all else fails you can simply ignore them and start reading the other articles again! Yipee!

Can you think of any more of these? Is so, send them to us! - Ed.

PRINTER REVIEW - CITIZEN 120D+

by Alan Hitchen

The Citizen 120D+ is a 9-pin Epson compatible dot matrix printer. It is made in the UK and comes with a two year guarantee. Prices vary, so shop around for the best deal, mine cost £135.00 from Silica Systems. The ribbon cartridge has a life of two million characters. The print head will last for 100 million characters and can be easily replaced, as like the ribbon it is a snap-in unit.

A converter is needed to adapt the Atari computer output to suit the standard parallel printer interface (a serial interface is an option with this model). I used the MicroPrint device, available from Micro Discount or Gralin International. This is a "fit-and-forget" unit, just plug it in and away you go.

But before you do so, to ensure all is well there are two built-in test routines. One prints the entire Epson or IBM character set, the other identifies the control program, the current dipswitch settings, and prints a line of Hs to check alignment. The computer does not need to be connected to carry these out. Another diagnostic tool is the Hex/ASCII dump facility. This will print all text and control codes received by the printer, ideal for de-bugging.

If you intend to use only programs written for an Epson compatible then you need do nothing further. The standard settings are for the Epson FX/LX with a UK character set, i.e the hash symbol is replaced by a pound sign. However, the set-up may be altered by the dip-switches mounted on the interface. The manual states that the interface unit must be withdrawn for the settings to be changed, but there is a sliding cover in the bottom of the printer well which allows access to the switches. These switches can select Epson FX/LX or IBM Graphics printer modes with a selection of over 20 options within either configuration.

Apart from the power switch at the left side, there are switches for On Line, Line Feed, and Form Feed on the front panel together with Power, Paper Out, and Ready lights. Using the panel switches, one of the two type styles may be chosen, as can NLQ text. Also available is a print style mode with a choice of NLQ, Italic, Emphasised, Compressed, Double or Quadruple size text. It is also possible to select Auto Sheet Feed (the feeder is an optional extra), 6", or 11 2/3" form lengths. A tractor feeder is supplied for continuous paper which may be fed from above, or below if using a printer stand (also an option).

For the more adventurous who wish to write their own programs, most of the 150 page manual is given over to detailing the many features of the printer, illustrated by example programs in Microsoft Basic. Tips for adapting the programs to other Basic types, including Atari Basic, are given.

So how does the printer perform? As mentioned before two type styles are provided, Citizen Display and Courier. These can be printed in draft at 120 characters per second, or 144 cps in high speed elite mode. Near Letter Quality is available at 25 cps. The Epson mode has 96 regular characters, 32 accented characters for 11 languages, and 32 graphic and special characters. The IBM mode has the 96 regular characters and 133 graphic and special characters.

Text can be printed in pica or elite pitch which can be expanded, compressed, or even expanded and compressed. Double or quadruple size print can be used (in width, height or both together). Proportional printing is available, plus justification, and full control of page formatting, line and character spacing, margins, page length etc. Print can be emphasised, in double strike or both together for really dark text. Characters can be in italics, underlined or overscored (IBM only), with sub-script or super-script, or even reversed (white on black) print. These can be selected and cancelled by individual commands, or by the master pitch, print, and reset options that can activate a number of features together with only one command.

A tear-out quick reference guide will help you keep track of the many options available. Graphics are no problem! Use the sets provided, or design your own graphic characters, and print them out in densities from 60 to 240 dpi. You can also design your own complete character set, or just change an individual character if required.

The Epson standard is well supported by commercial and Public Domain software, so there is bound to be something to suit your requirements. I have had no problems using such programs with the Citizen; so I have no hesitation in recommending this printer to you. However, prices are falling and you might like to consider the 24 pin and colour models from Citizen, which no-doubt would be of an equally high quality.

AND THAT'S HOW I WANT IT TO STAY

By Kevin Cooke

It must have been five or six years ago - I can still remember receiving my first Atari and being 'over the moon' with it. A 2600 seemed incredible in those days - great graphics (!), instant loading, but more importantly, something new. Hours were spent trying to complete Jungle Hunt and improve my scores at Stargate - my brother and I even created a high score chart to go on the wall although I'm sure he made some of his scores up!

It seems that all of this fun had to come to an end. Fate seemed to ensure that the day when it was due to stop working would occur. I still remember how upset I was - it's hard for a 9 year old boy to lose any toy, let alone that which he spent 24 hours a day on!

The lonely feeling didn't last for long though - the gleeful feeling as I unwrapped my 130XE on Christmas day can only be imagined if the same has happened to you. It was a new computer and looked even better than the last. I vividly remember trying all morning to get my Dad to set it up for me. I loved it - when we got a working one back from Atari that is! Our's had decided to do about as much as a tortoise with a bad leg and chronic tiredness!

The years went on and I really started to get to know my Atari. My Dad found an issue of 'New Atari User' (and later, 'Page 6') in the local W.H. Smiths, and I discovered that there were hundreds more games than those I had. The local computer store was now getting pestered every week to find me new games, and my Atari was, by now, getting used practically all day long.

The gift of a disk drive only a couple of Christmas's later opened up even more possibilities - I still remember trying DOS for the first time and using the "Format disk" option without knowing what it did. Time to say "Goodbye" to my DOS program!

As time went on, my computer set-up evolved yet again. I added a 1029 printer, now replaced by a Citizen 120D. My software on disk alone has grown to several disk boxes full and I am still adding to it.

The strange thing is that it took me almost 5 years to learn that programming can be fun. Only now do I realise that I don't HAVE to spend money to have fun with my computer. Of course, I still do spend the money I used to (in fact, I'm now spending more than I used to), but I now have something else to fall back on.

Only now have I started to find out the real possibilities of that grey box I had previously been using simply to play games on. Word processers, databases, spreadsheets, programming languages, and DTP programs all now provide me with as much fun as games do.

I know the limitations of my machine but they hold no real boundaries for me - it still does everything I need it to do. I have no need for a computer that can play hours of digitized soundtrack - I have a stereo that can do a better job. I have no need to be able to draw graphs in a hundred different ways, and I don't have the time to spend a year learning to use just one word processor. My Atari has provided a stepping stone to allow me to use other computers with ease - not many people can use a PC without having used anything like it before.

A memory upgrade would be nice, and a U.S. Doubler or 'Happy' chip
would certainly cut down disk loading time, but neither are essential.
For now at least, my Atari will be the only computer in my home. I've
survived the 16-bit era with it, and it looks as if I'll be surviving
the 32 and 64-bit era as well. Perhaps when a computer can perform some
'wizzo' function such as reading my mind, I'll consider selling. In the
meantime I'll still be writing articles on my trusty 8-bit. And that's
the way I want it to stay!

JAWBREAKER - MOUSEKATTACK

Reviewed by Alan Hitchen

In the beginning was Pac-Man whose pill eating antics inspired a
million other maze games. Jawbreaker is one, or rather two of them.
Originally released by Sierra-on-line in 1980 as two separate games,
their creator, John D. Harris, has made them both available again via
Richard Gore.

Jawbreaker puts you in the role of a set of gnashers with a big
appetite. Your task is to clear the maze of all that yummy candy that
is just lying around. However, the smiling faces of the tooth rotters
are never far behind, and if they catch you, your teeth fall out, and
after three lives have been lost the game is over. To help you there
are four special Jawbreaker sweets that will allow you to turn the
tables on the tooth rotters and eat them as well. Also, a tunnel runs
from top to bottom to let you give them the slip. From time-to-time
extra items will appear, which you can eat to gain bonus points. When
the maze has been cleared your teeth are given a jolly good brushing,
then it's on to the next level and yet more candy to eat. The
alternative maze provided (selectable at boot-up) has an extra escape
tunnel to help you out when things get really tough on the higher
levels.

Mousekattack comes from the same source and puts a new twist in the
game. This time you are a plumber and your task is to lay pipe in all
the corridors. This seems simple but there are some snags. Firstly,
mistakes can happen and you will have to re-lay a section if you get it
wrong. Secondly, there are three giant rats roaming the maze; they are
hungry, and if they can catch you they will eat you!! Help is provided
in the form of two cats, which you can place anywhere to frighten off
the rats. Two cages are provided to catch the rats. If you get to the
cage before the rat has wriggled free, it is captured and bonus points
gained. However, the captured rat is soon replaced by another one, and
the replacement may be a super rat. The super rat can eat your cats but
can still be trapped in a cage. This game has a two player mode, in
which each plumber is frightened of the other player's cats, which
makes things even more difficult, and lots more fun.

Jawbreaker is a good game in the traditional mould that can't be
faulted, but Mousekattack has the edge with its added gameplay and
excellent presentation that lifts this game out of the ordinary. It is
highly recommended.

These games are available individually or together in tape, turbo tape
or disk formats, direct from Richard Gore or from DGS. Cost: £6.95 (any
format) for both games together.

INSTANT CHARACTER SETS

By Alan Hitchen

Usually you will find that most Basic programs load new character sets
in from a data table, using the FOR I=0 TO 1023 loop method that seems
to take forever. Disk drive users can speed things up by loading in a
file using an IOCB block, but by using a character set held in a
string, loading can be done in an instant.

In issue 12 of the News-Disk a program was provided to convert a
standard 9 sector disk file into a data table, together with another
program that would convert the data into a string. Here is the
explanation of how this method works, better late than never!

FDISPLAY.BAS is the loading program provided, which works as follows:

10 DIM CC$(1024), the program must find this variable first. If the
subroutine has been added to an existing program it must be listed,
entered and saved to correct the variable table.

GOSUB 29000, takes you to the subroutine.

29000 MTOP=PEEK (106)-4, location 106 holds the size of available RAM
in pages (256 bytes), -4 reserves 4 pages or 1024 bytes for the new
character set. A half set, punctuation, numbers and uppercase letters,
as used in GR.1 & 2 needs only 2 pages.

29020 POKE 106,MTOP-4, this reserves another 4 pages of memory. This is
needed to protect the character set, as a GRAPHICS or clear (?
CHR$(125)) command will erase 64 bytes above RAMtop, and scrolling a
text window in a graphics mode will clear 800 bytes. This protection is
not needed for the XL/XE as the bug has been fixed, simply POKE 106,MTOP.

GRAPHICS 0, this graphics call is necessary to re-establish the display
list and screen data below the new RAMtop.

29030 D=PEEK(140)+256*PEEK(141), this finds the start of the string and
array table.

R=PEEK(134)+256*PEEK(135), this finds the beginning of the variable
value table. Bytes 3 & 4 hold the address of the string in the form of
the number of bytes it is from the beginning of the string and array
table.

29040 Q=MTOP*256-D, calculates the number of bytes from the string and
array table for the new address.

R1=INT(Q/256), calculates the most significant byte of the value in Q.

T=Q-R1*256, calculates the least significant byte of Q.

20950 POKE R+2,T: POKE R+3,R1, these POKEs change the address of the
string in the variable value table. When run the program will store the
string at the new address in reserved memory.

31000 to 31120, the string itself, which must be added to this program.

31150 POKE 756,MTOP, points the character base register to the address
of the new character set, which is now ready and waiting. A GRAPHICS or

DOS call or RESET will restore 756 to the default value, so it will have to be re-POKEd to re-activate the new character set. Several character sets can be stored, depending on available memory, and can be selected simply by changing the address in location 756 as required.

DGS PD disk 141 contains the above program (as INSTCAR.BAS) complete with the SPACE font string. This disk also contains 23 fonts, a loader subroutine for disk files, and a display utility that will allow you to view up to 7 fonts at once. The Create-a-Font program also supplied will allow you to edit existing fonts or make a new one. This has an accessory program to create a data loading subroutine from a standard font file.

PUBLIC DOMAIN REVIEW

By Alan Hitchen

One of the many programs available for the Epson and compatible printers is Daisy Dot III, by Roy Goldman (DGS PD32). No longer are you tied to the built-in fonts of your own printer, as this program uses the graphics mode to allow printing of NLQ fonts in whatever style you choose.

The original version allowed only one font per document. Daisy Dot II could use multiple fonts and print graphics dumps, as could the DD II based off-shoot, Dot Magic (all still available from Page 6). DD III has an improved font style and no longer needs pre-formatted text files. Now all formatting is handled by the program itself. This means that DD III format commands must be entered into the text file, not those of your word processor.

Basically all you need to do is write your text, most word processors will be fine as long as they can produce the backslash character needed for the DD III commands. Over 25 commands are available to control margins, spacing, width, justification, centering, density, fonts, underlining, tabs, headers, footers and so on. The file is then saved as normal. The Daisy Dot print processor is then loaded. The menu allows selection of text and font files, number of copies needed, start and end page number and print all, odd, or even pages. Printing can now proceed, the process can be speeded up if a RAMdisk is used to hold the necessary files. Otherwise, the program will run from the disk drive, pausing to load files as required.

New fonts can be created, or existing ones modified with the font editor program. Many fonts are already available in the Public Domain. DD II fonts can also be used, but DD II can't use DD III fonts. The font utilities program can magnify or italicise existing fonts, or convert standard Atari fonts to the Daisy Dot format.

The PD release is a truncated version intended to give you a taste of this excellent program. On payment of $25 to its creator, Roy Goldman, you will receive a full version of the program with more fonts and a 50 page printed manual.

A comprehensive users guide to Daisy Dot III, by Dave Richardson, is available from TWAUG, which uses DD III in the creation of their newsletter.

SMON in Quick

By Mark Watson

This article will be extremely useful for any Quick user who wants to add music to their Quick program without any hassle. You will need the yearly disk to use these programs. SMON is available in the DGS PD library. My Quick Tutorials series will be back next issue - Ed.

SMON is a package (in the PD) by Torsten Karworth from Germany for the creation of music for games, etc. The process of putting the music into the games, however, is quite complex, so for the lesser technical variety(!) of Quick users, here is how to do it.

Firstly, of course, you will require:

* An SMON un-compressed .SNG file - The tune

* The REPLAY.DAT file from the yearly disk - The MCODE player (NOT relocatable)

* Quick and an Atari 8-bit computer!

Now onto the programming. At the beginning of the program (in the INIT procedure?), the following lines will need to be added to load the song and re-player.

```
CLOSE(1)
OPEN(1,4,0,"D:REPLAY.DAT")
  BGET(1,$6FD,$8000)
CLOSE(1)
OPEN(1,4,0,"D:(NAME OF TUNE).SNG")
  BGET(1,$LENGTH,$PLACE IN MEMORY)
CLOSE(1)
```

For the place in memory I normally use $9000 as this leaves $A000-$B000 for your own data or the screen memory. For the Length divide the number of sectors the song takes by 8. This will give you a rough amount. Or, you could just put $FFF as this allows up to 4K for the tune. Anyway, enough rambling.

After all the drive access the following lines will need to be added.

```
INLINE
[
   $A2,Lo-Adr of tune,$A0,Hi-Adr of tune
   32,$49,$80
]
VBI(Name of VBI)

INTER Name of VBI VBI
BEGIN
PUSH
INLINE
[
  32,$EE,$80
]
PULL
ENDVBI
```

Well that's about it really. Here is a demo source text to show how it
can be done.

```
MAIN
   OPEN(1,4,0,"D:REPLAY.DAT")
   BGET(1,$6FF,$8000)
   CLOSE(1)
   OPEN(1,4,0,"D:A.SNG")
   BGET(1,$800,$9000)
   CLOSE(1)
   INLINE
      [
        $A2,0,$A0,$90
        32,$49,$80
      ]
   VBI(ACE)
   -1
   PRINT("Hi Freaks!!")
   JUMP(1)
ENDMAIN

INTER ACE VBI
   BEGIN
   PUSH
   INLINE
      [
        32,$EE,$80
      ]
   PULL
ENDVBI
```